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Inside Information

SAIOSDA MEETS, ELECTS NEW OFFICERS

The Southern Association of Information Officers of State Departments of Agriculture met recently at Myrtle Beach, S.C.

Initial reports are that South Carolina Department of Agriculture information officer Sonny Smith put an excellent program together for SAIOSDA members and guests.

Some top-notch communications instructors from the University of South Carolina conducted a workshop on improving skills.

Materials submitted by the various state information offices were critiqued by the instructors.

The SAIOSDA board decided to look at the possibility of establishing an electronic mail linkup via commercial time sharing firm between state information offices and USDA information offices in the South and Washington, D.C.

New officers elected at the meeting are:

Paulette Fewell, Tennessee Department of Agriculture, president.

Valera Jesse, Georgia Department of Agriculture & Commerce, re-elected secretary and treasurer.

Charles Allen, Florida Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services, board member at large.

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NEW WAY TO SOLVE OLD FOOD SAFETY PROBLEM

Consumer education has been advocated as a means of reducing food poisoning over the years.

However, there are still about 7 million cases reported annually, most of the victims being children.

So, members of the information media services staff in USDA's Food Safety & Inspection Service decided to take the message to the primary source--the children.

"Getting the information into schools was part of the plan," says Kevin Shields, deputy director for media services.

"We also wanted a package designed with built-in feedback."

The solution: A national food safety poster contest.

First, masters carrying food safety information and instructions for the contest were sent to 75,000 elementary schools across the nation.

Shields says masters were used to reduce printing and mailing costs, with each school asked to use their own ditto machines to print the appropriate number required.

As a result, nearly 45,000 elementary school students responded to the poster contest which, in effect, measured the effectiveness of the food safety package.

The students had been given total artistic freedom to express their ideas on food safety.

The only restriction was that the size of the poster could not be larger than 8-1/2 by 11 inches.

Posters were submitted from school children in all 50 states and Puerto Rico.

The 45,000 entries were reviewed and 350 of the best posters were selected by an outside firm.

The 350 best entries then were sent to the Food Safety & Inspection Service information staff, where the entries were narrowed down to 25 top posters.

A panel of judges selected, from

(continued on next page)

USDA COMMUNICATOR CLIMBS MOUNTAIN

A USDA radio specialist was a member of the special mountain climbing team of handicapped persons recently who climbed Mt. Ranier in Washington.

Doug Wakefield, with USDA Agricultural Research Service's information staff in Washington, worked as he climbed.

As a front page photo in Seattle Times showed, Wakefield had a microphone taped to his hard hat during the climb to the top. He interviewed fellow climbers for National Public Radio.

He adds that sounds, of course, are important for a blind person and that Mt. Rainier is a "pretty noisy mountain."

Wakefield, who is blind, is known for his excellent radio features prepared for ARS in cooperation with the USDA Radio-TV Center.

For more details of his experience, Wakefield may be contacted in Room 447-A, Administration Building, at USDA, or call (202) 447-7067.

USDA COMMUNICATOR ENDS PUERTO RICO STINT

Herbert Strum, information specialist with USDA's Food & Nutrition Service at Robbinsville, N.J., has completed a two-year detail with the Puerto Rico Department of Agriculture.

Strum served as a marketing coordinator in the agriculture development administration of the PRDA.

The assignment was part of an effort to improve the agricultural situation in the commonwealth.

Strum has returned to FNS' Mid-Atlantic Regional Office to resume his public information duties.

KEY IS HOW CONSUMER PERCEIVES MESSAGE

Kellogg company officials recently protested a USDA proposed labeling requirement for yogurt.

The company cited a 1980 case in which a federal court mandated that before label regulations are passed, it must be proven that they are necessary and that the new rules do not create greater confusion than the old rules.

The key, according to Kellogg, is how consumers understand and perceive the meaning of packaging messages--not how the USDA staff thinks consumers may do so.

BELL LABS DEVELOP COMPUTERIZED EDITOR

Writers, rejoice.

The bellowing editor and his axe-like pencil may soon join the ranks of blacksmiths, slide rules and vacuum tubes.

At Bell Laboratories in New Jersey, scientists, linguists and psychologists have developed a computerized editor--a "sort of Lou Grant on a chip" according to an article in the July issue of Discover magazine.

The editor can help scientists write their papers in plain English, but it raises the dickens with good prose.

The computer spots cliches and wordy phrases, slashes long and rambling sentences. It also suggests lively alternatives to deadly jargon, and pleads for simplification of the overly complex.

It corrects spelling, punctuation and grammar.

The writer can also ask for a literary appraisal by asking the computerized editor to spin through some samples of the works of famous authors to provide embarrassing comparisons.

However, the writer can, if desired, override the editor simply by refusing to take its advice.

Goal of the mechanical editor is to help scientists clean up their turgid and often ungrammatical technical papers.

The Discover article illustrates President Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address" edited by the Bell computer.

The editor says of the famous address: "Your document contains many more complex sentences than is common for this type of text.

"One way to improve this text would be to rephrase the most important ideas in simple sentences."

Then the computerized editor presents a revised version of the Gettysburg Address.

It begins:

"Eighty-seven years ago, our grandfathers created a free nation here. They based it on the idea that everybody is created equal.

"We are now fighting a civil war to see if this or any similar nation can survive."

And it takes the famous line, "and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth," and edits it to say:

"so that the people's government will endure."

Enough said.

Dave Sutton, assistant public affairs director for graphic arts in USDA's Office of Governmental & Public Affairs, was recently elected first vice president of the Art Directors Club of metropolitan Washington, D.C..

Sutton will be in charge of programs for the 1982 season.

The Art Directors Club has over 400 members from the public and private sector.

It has had an important voice in visual communication, printing, graphic design and related communication arts in the Washington area for nearly 30 years.

The club has sponsored a wide range of programs, from co-sponsoring a resident associate program series with the Smithsonian Institute to having a portfolio review day for local high school and college students.

PUBLICATIONS DISTRIBUTION HELP AVAILABLE

The Government Printing Office's Public Documents Distribution Center, located in Pueblo, Colo., provides high-volume, low-cost federal publication distribution services to federal agencies on a reimbursable basis, according to GPO.

The GPO operation's largest customer is the Consumer Information Center, which prepares a catalog listing of free and moderately priced consumer information.

A limited number of popular sales publications and forms are also mailed from the Pueblo center.

A permanent staff of 80 employees, augmented by 45 part-time personnel, distributed more than 29 million publications and catalogs last year.

FARMERS' NEWSLINE NUMBER CHANGES

Tight budgets have caught up with the "Farmers' Newsline" toll-free 800 service operated by the USDA economics management services information staff.

The "Newsline" was converted to a 900 type service, where the caller is billed 50 cents per call. The number is (900) 976-0404.

If you want a listing of the daily reports available, contact Ben Blankenship, director of information, Economics Management Staff, Room 440-GHI, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250. Or call (202) 447-4230.

Enrique Martinez, Spanish broadcast coordinator for the California Cooperative Extension Service, at Riverside, has issued a report on "A Beginning--El Comienzo" of radio news in Spanish.

Martinez conducted a survey of 92 California radio stations that broadcast part time or full time in Spanish.

The survey was conducted prior to release of the California Extension Service's first Spanish language radio service on April 1 this year.

The survey showed stations would most likely use information about money management, food buying and nutrition, home pest control, cooking and canning, child rearing and family size farming.

The Spanish language broadcasters said they would least likely use subjects on clothes and fabrics, vegetable gardening, agricultural research, commercial farming, flower gardening and lawn care.

For more details of Martinez' report, write to him at the Cooperative Extension Service, University of California, Riverside, CA 92521.

MONEY SAVING TIP OFFERED

When seeking a special effect, editors sometimes order text lines to be set in 16-point or larger type.

Government Printing Office contract terms require that display type--all type larger than 14-point--be charged at greater prices than smaller type.

If saving costs is important in a particular job, stick to 14-point or smaller type, says GPO.

Another reminder from GPO: If larger type is used, allow more white space between lines to maintain a legible and eye-pleasing product.

FACT SHEET ON HOUSEHOLD CHEMICALS

Ed Poe in USDA's Publishing Center is collecting information from Extension Service household equipment specialists for a possible new fact sheet on using household chemicals/cleaning supplies.

The fact sheet was highly recommended by Eleanor Kelly of the federal Consumer Information Center.

For further information contact Poe in Room 546-A, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250, or call (202) 447-6624.
